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Научный семинар Школы лингвистики НИУ ВШЭ

с участием лингвистической лаборатории по корпусным
технологиям и лаборатории языков Кавказа

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The semantics of source and associated semantic roles

The semantic role *source* in the space domain is the role taken by a landmark of a motion event, in which a trajector moves away from the landmark. In *Mary goes from Moscow to Milan*, *Milan* is the landmark of the spatial relation and takes the role of source. Similar to source but not necessarily connected with motion is the role *origin*, as in *A woman from Moscow*. In the domain of causal relations, source and origin are typically connected with roles taken by participants that initiate an event, such as agent and cause. Diachronically, agent markers may arise from morphemes that were earlier limited to source or origin, or from genitive markers. The relation between source/origin and genitives, which is cross-linguistically very frequent, is based on the part/whole relation and on a metaphor by which possessors are conceived as wholes and possessed entities are conceived as being their parts.

A comparatively lesser investigated issue connected with the space domain is the so-called source-goal asymmetry, which includes various characteristics of the two roles. In general, goals of motion are expressed more frequently and in more fine-grained ways than sources. In addition, unlike sources, which often behave as adjuncts, goals tend to share properties with verbal arguments. Patterns of polysemy within systems of spatial marking also point in the same direction: static locations are commonly coded synchronically by the same markers as goals of motion, and in a way distinct from sources. Notably, this pattern of polysemy does





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not mean that diachronic mergers of source and location are not attested: much to the contrary, many individual locative markers in European languages – such as French *dedans* ‘inside’ or Ancient Greek *ópisthe(n)* ‘behind’ – often go back to ablative expressions, suggesting an earlier ablative-locative transfer. However, it is remarkable that once a marker acquires the locative meaning, it loses the original ablative meaning. Thus, while the extension from source to location is attested, possibly even more frequently than commonly believed, polysemy tends to be avoided.

Note, however, that special types of landmarks (spatial referents, human beings) often allow some overlap in the use of ablative and locative encoding, and can be at the origin of ablative-locative transfers. The encoding of certain spatial relations depends on the type of landmark, and non-conventional landmarks (e.g. human beings) often require special types of encoding. With time, such differential marking may give rise to markers that are no longer obviously related to the original spatial concept. Differential marking is relevant in the domain of causal relations as well, as human landmarks taking the role of cause can be kept distinct from agents if they are not controllers.

In my talk, I will discuss some general features of the semantic role source based on cross-linguistic evidence, and then will concentrate on source encoding in Ancient Greek. Issues discussed will include semantic extension and polysemy in the space domain as well as in other cognitive domains, asymmetries, and differential marking.

Старая Басманная 21/4,
аудитория 518
27 мая (пятница) в 10:30

Сайт семинара:
ling.hse.ru/SciSeminar

